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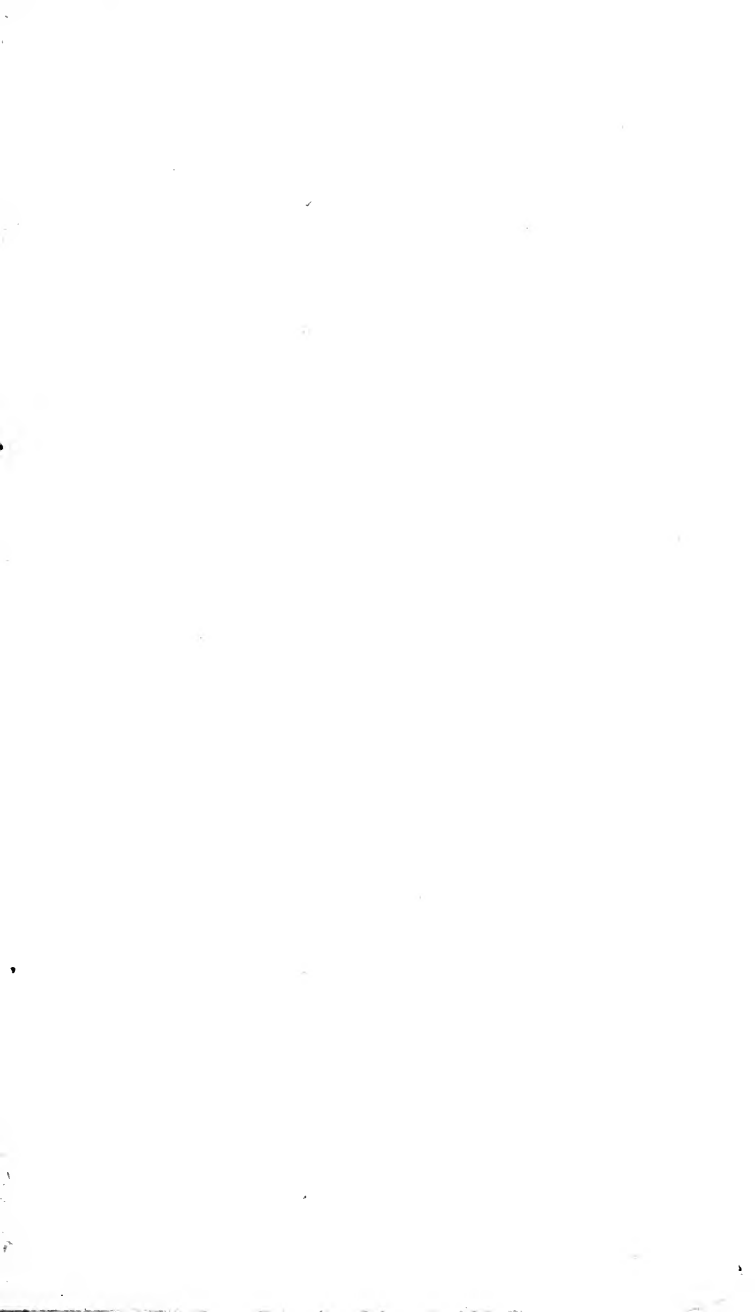


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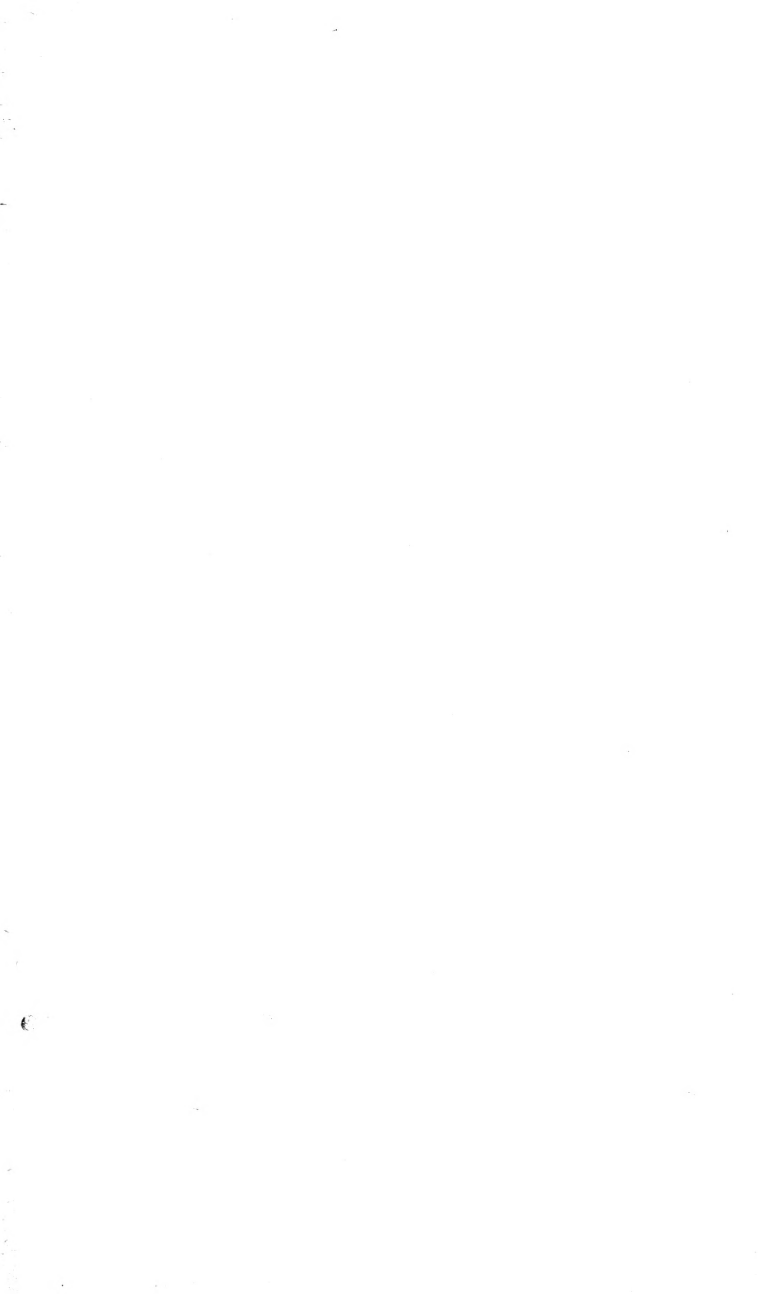
Chap. E 133

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.









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Benjamin Franklin De Costa.

Verrazzano :

A Motion for the Stay of Judgment.

BUT stay, I'll read it over once
again. II HENRY, VI.

Among the Romayns Quintus
Fabius for this qualitie is soue-
rainely extolled amonge his-
toriens ; and for that cause he
is often times called of them
Fabius Iectator. T. ELIOT.

NEW YORK :

1876.

L.







Verrazzano.

THE New-England Historical and Genealogical Register for January is at hand, laden with valuable material, several leaves of which remained uncut until recently; otherwise one of the contributions would have been noticed ere this, since it demands attention. The article in question relates chiefly to Mr. Murphy's recent publication on the voyage of Verrazzano, a Navigator in the service of Francis I., King of France, who, in 1524, sailed along the Atlantic coast, and described New England. Mr. Murphy has come forward to demonstrate that the voyage never took place, and that the Letter attributed to Verrazzano is a fabrication. The writer in the *Register* endorses Mr. Murphy,

and tells us that we must draw a black line over all that has been written on the subject in our histories. But not so fast.

Of course, it is the right, nay the duty of every historical student to criticise the annals of the past and eliminate the false from the true. There is too little of this work done in these days. But the critic himself is amenable to criticism, and Mr. Murphy's work is open to serious objections. He, indeed, makes out a plausible theory, and his ingenious arguments might deceive even the elect. Still, while the spirit of the writer is admirable, and the aim fair, his work is quite overshadowed by the influence of the professional habit; and we discover, not only the historian in search of truth, but the attorney warmly reaching out to grasp the verdict. Hence the work is characterized by organic weakness, disguised under an appearance of strength.

We cannot deal here in detail with Mr. Murphy's work, as it would require the lee-way of a Quarterly Review; but we may, nevertheless, point out several faults.

As a general observation, it might be noted that the work is based chiefly upon two assumptions, namely, that the Letter of Verrazzano, printed in 1556, giving an account of the voyage, was drawn from a document known as the "Carli Letter," and that the Letter of Verrazzano was unknown in the lifetime of Francis I. We repeat, deliberately, that these are assumptions. And upon this foundation the whole superstructure of doubt has been reared. Now of the probable value of these assumptions the reader may better judge, after the statement of a fact or two, indicating the faulty character of Mr. Murphy's information respecting some topics that should be well understood. We refer to what he says about the information contained

in Verrazzano's Letter, which, he claims, fails to mention well known things, and that, therefore, he could never have made the voyage or visited the New England coast. Amongst other omissions by Verrazzano, is that of the subject of wampum; also of tobacco and Indian names. The writer in the *Register* thinks, with Mr. Murphy, that these omissions are remarkable, and therefore refuses to believe that Verrazzano described New England from actual knowledge. But, before adopting this conclusion, we should inquire, not only what other explorers have said, but what they have *not* said. Various early writers do not mention either wampum, tobacco, or any Indian words. But we are finally told, that the "most remarkable omission of all" is that of the *bark* canoe, which Verrazzano, if he had made the voyage, must have seen covering the waters. Verrazzano does *not* mention the bark canoe, but *does* say that the natives

made their canoes from the trunks of trees, which they burned out, and shaped into boats. And in this respect Verrazzano is *perfectly correct*. Lescarbot when on the New England coast in 1607, investigated the whole subject, and we know both from him and Champlain, that, while bark canoes were made in Massachusetts and Maine, the *prevailing type* was that of the log canoe. In 1524, it is probable that the birch canoe was not known at all, as it was difficult to make before the introduction of iron tools by Europeans, and was confined to northern parts, where the trees were generally small and scarce, which rendered canoes of bark and skin necessary, no matter what might be the cost. Farther south, in Maine and Massachusetts, where the timber was larger, *fire* would build ~~the~~ the canoe, and this ^{easy} easy but slow style of naval construction prevailed, until the white man came with sharp knives and hatchets. Then the

tedious process of burning gradually went out of use, since, with sharp tools, a canoe could be made from bark in a day.

On this point, however, we have definite statements. Lescarbot, who treats at large of the canoe in his work on "New France," tells us that the northern and Canadian fashion is to build with bark; but that the people living between Nova Scotia and Florida have "another fashion;" and he minutely describes the manner in which they burned out and shaped their canoes, as they did in the day of Verrazzano. Moreover, Champlain tells us himself that he *saw* the log canoes near Cape Ann, though he also mentions the bark canoe, which was then coming into vogue, the Indians being encouraged by the tools and the example of the white man; who also taught him to propel his canoe by means of sails, of which Jossleyn, for instance, gives an example.

Champlain not only saw the log canoe,

but, at Saco, Lescarbot also notes them. Speaking of the French at that place he says, "presently the Sea was scene all covered over with their Boates, laden with nimble and lusty men holding themselves vp straight in them: which wee cannot doe without danger, these Boates being nothing else *but trees hollowed out.*" (Purchas, Vol. 4, p. 1633.)

We give this simply as one illustration of the worthlessness of the charges brought by Mr. Murphy against the Letter of Verrazzano. The "most remarkable omission of all," or the failure to speak of the *bark* canoe, is one of the proofs of its *authenticity*. And if the charges in connection with well known matters are of this character, what ground is there for confidence in connections where knowledge is not so easily acquired? Some reply to this query will be given at another time. It suffices to say for the present, that this elaborate work by Mr. Murphy appears to us as a grand

mistake. It does not even give correct teaching respecting the boundaries of New France, or Norombega; the narrative of Jean Allfonsce being mistranslated, latitude *forty-five* being given for the "Cape of Norombega," which Allfonsce says is in *forty-one*. The map drawn to embody the blunder, with all the conclusions built upon it, therefore falls to the ground; like the charges brought against Verrazzano, in connection with the harborage, overlooking the fact that many others met with similar experiences. All this may appear ungracious, but we speak in the interest of the truth.

Assuming that the Carli version was the source of Ramusio's, Mr. Murphy attacks the author's veracity, because he says that, in a part of America the color of the natives was black and "not much different" from that of Ethiopians, though it is clear that it *was* different. If, however, we were to reject every old narrative on account of palpable exagge-

rations, we should have little material left. It would then fare hard with Cartier who, in his voyage of 1534, puts tropical productions in Canada, and with Popham, who (1607) made nutmegs grow in New England, and with Gosnold (1602) whose scribe makes certain men in Vineyard Sound *black and thin bearded*, and with Weymouth (1605) who makes the women of Maine *black*. Otherwise, conceding for the time the assumption that the Carli version is the original, Mr. Murphy's objection is *not criticism*. One might as well tell us that the proprietor of Merry Mount was never in New England, because he says that **£** they have no *coughs and colds* there. Referring, however, the Ramusio and Carli versions, to an earlier version, as we have a perfect right to do, (though willing even that the matter should be decided by the Carli version *alone*, as the objections, if not corruptions, may be simply common exaggerations, like some

of those pointed out,) we shall then the more readily understand the differences in the two texts; since, for instance, Hakluyt, when translating Allfonsce, makes him say that figs grow in Canada, while a second translation tells us that Canada extends to the land of Figuier. Without an original version to refer to, we might say that the latter was "worked over" from the former to conceal the author's ignorance; or that Mr. Murphy's version of Allfonsce, where he says that the natives of Norombega are "large and handsome," is worked over from the corrupt edition of Allfonsce, of 1559, which declares that these people are *small and blackish*. Fortunately, however, we have the original. But, in connection with the Carli version itself, we have an illustration of the manner in which language is perverted. For instance, that disinterested scholar, the late Dr. Coggeswell, translates one passage from the Carli version as follows: "We

have often seen the grapes which they produce very sweet and pleasant, and not unlike our own;" but Mr. Murphy's version insists upon the following: "Because *tasting the fruit many times*, we perceived it was sweet and pleasant, not different from ours." Thus wide are the departures already made within a few years from the version of Carli, and they indicate faintly the nature of the vicissitudes which have overtaken the original Letter of Verrazzano. It is therefore to be regretted, so far as present consequences may be concerned, that the language of the Florentine has been treated in what seems to us such an unfortunate way.

We close this brief notice by referring to the significant fact that Mr. Murphy gives one piece of teaching in his book, (p. 145) which, if true, would have obviated the necessity of printing an expensive and elegant octavo volume. The teaching is this, that at the time Verraz-

Zañö, according to his Letter, was exploring America, he was actually engaged as a Corsair, capturing a ship on her way home from the Indies. But Mr. Murphy does not give us the *date* of capture, which he would have done, if there had been any to give. The proof of this should have been upon the forefront of his book; though such proof would have been all the book needed. As it is, the teaching finds its own place in an obscure corner, only to spring upon the reader at the proper time, when warmed with suppositious doubt. There is nothing in it.

We believe, therefore, that when thoroughly discussed, the Letter of Verrazzano, like the Voyage of the Zeni, will rise above all doubt, and that the names of Ramusio and Verrazzano, the Historian and the Navigator, will alike stand together in the annals of America to the end of time.

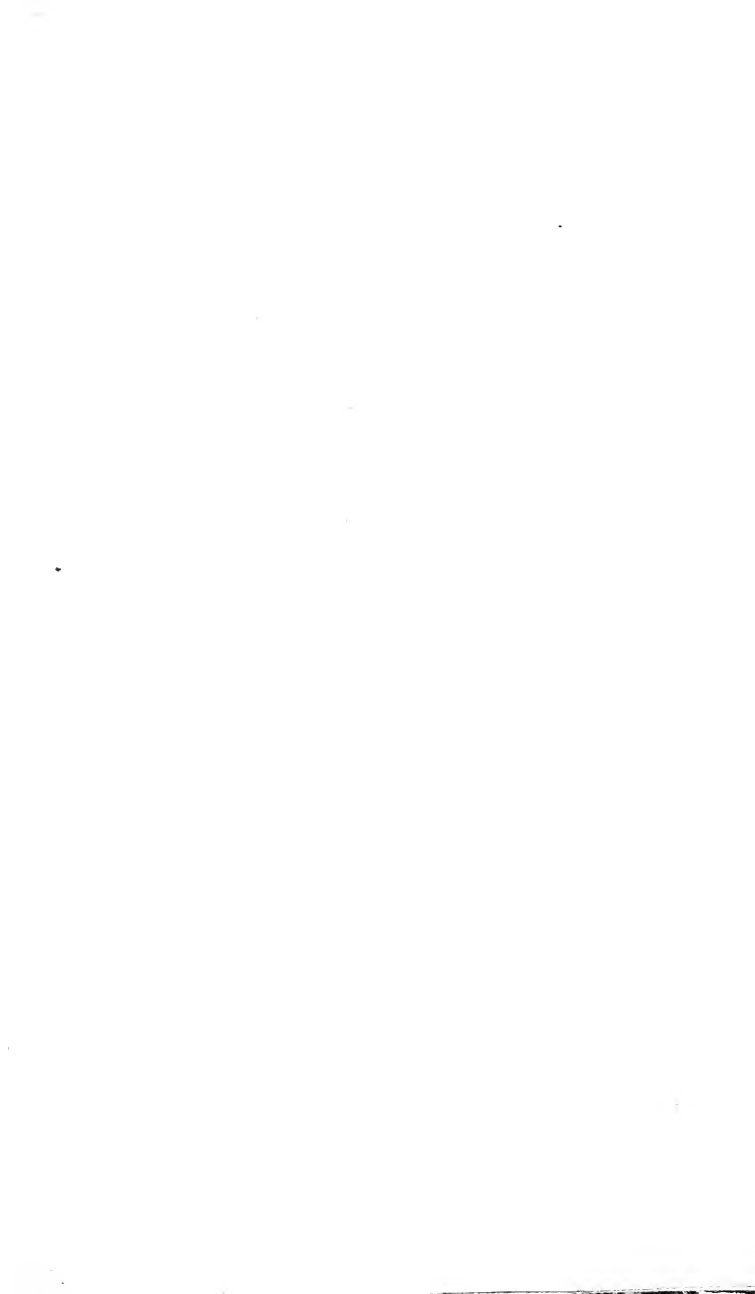
Addenda.

Since the foregoing was put in type, a copy of the "*Revue Critique*" has come to hand, containing copies of two documents just discovered in the archives of Rouen, which show that Verrazzano had a brother named Jerome. He was the author of the Map that indicates the voyage. This brother has been treated as a *myth* by some, in order to discredit both voyage and map. But the discovery shows that, May 11th, 1526, this Jerome was living, and that "Jerasme de Varasenne" was the brother and heir (*frere et heritier*) of the "Noble homme Jehan de Varasenne."

To illustrate the ease with which a disputant with a theory adopts whatever appears to be in his favor, it may be

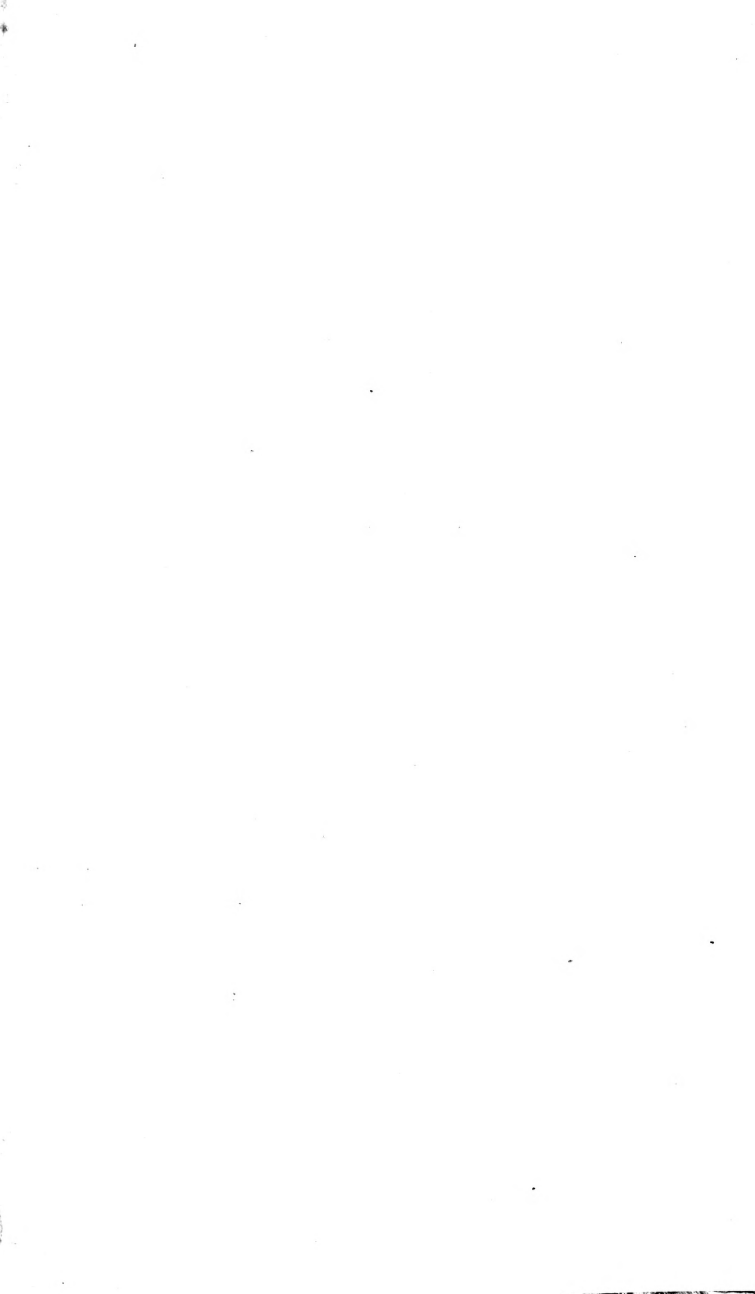
pointed out that the estimable author of the work under notice teaches that Martin Pring, in 1603, obtained a bark canoe at Martha's Vineyard. In this he follows the story set afloat in 1897 by Belknap: In 1603 Martin Pring did not go around or south of Cape Cod; and therefore did not obtain any bark canoe or build any "barricado" at Martha's Vineyard.



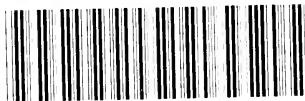








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